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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 002070

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AMGT](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: TFI201: JORDANIAN FSNS AND THE WAR NEXT DOOR

REF: SANAA 607

Classified By: AMBASSADOR EDWARD W. GNEHM, REASONS 1.5 B AND D

1. (C) Summary: As in Sanaa (reftel), the FSNS at the U.S. Mission in Amman are experiencing societal pressures and some personal doubts about working for the USG as a result of the war with Iraq. A recent news article implying that some FSNS effectively are spying on demonstrators for the Embassy was particularly disturbing to them. The Post FSN committee has expressed FSN worries about life-insurance restrictions should they be killed in a war-related or terrorist incident and has asked about establishing a "danger pay" for FSNS working at the Embassy. Meanwhile, rising anti-American sentiments have resulted in some vendors and landlords refusing to work with the Embassy now. Even some professional-level contacts are shying away from association with the Embassy. The Regional Medical Officer recently was advised by close Jordanian medical colleagues to stay away from the hospital principally used by the Embassy because they feared for his personal safety. As the war in Iraq and the Intifada go on, pressures on our FSN employees to disassociate themselves from the Embassy are likely to grow. End summary.

2. (C) The referenced telegram from Sanaa struck a chord with us here in Amman where our FSNS are experiencing similar pressures and concerns now that the battle has been joined in Iraq. Many FSNS have expressed the increasing discomfort they feel due to their association with the Embassy. This includes hearing disparaging remarks from friends and family members, some of whom have encouraged them to quit working for the Americans. Some have noted that they feel very uncomfortable calling Jordanian contacts and requesting meetings or information. One pointed to a small news article published in the most recent edition of As-Sabeel -- the mouthpiece of the Islamic Action Front -- which reported that "some members of the American Embassy staff" are gathering information on demonstrations, protests, and other political activity that is being used by the USG. The unstated but clear implication (in the view of some FSNS) is that those FSNS are acting as "spies" for the Americans against their Arab brethren. Obviously, the type of information we are talking about is the bread and butter of Embassy reporting. However, it is being painted in the most negative of terms, terms which make our FSNS feel very uncomfortable.

3. (C) The degree to which FSNS are feeling societal pressures due to their employment with the Embassy varies. FSNS working in the Political section -- who are often called on to explain U.S. policy and act as intermediaries -- are feeling particularly vulnerable and have expressed their growing reservations about working for the USG at this time. On the other hand, Consular FSNS, although upset by U.S. policies and actions in the region, are able to focus their energies on processing visas, which they see as providing services to Jordanians. However, one Consular FSN told the acting Consul that she is unable to sleep because she is constantly watching the news and worrying about the war. FSNS in USAID report similar pressures and anxieties. The pictures of civilian casualties of the war on Arab television are particularly disturbing to FSN employees.

4. (C) During recent bi-weekly meetings with the Management Counselor, Post FSN Committee members discussed FSN employee concerns about safety and security. Of particular concern to them was the fact that the post's FSN life insurance program would provide no benefits to their families in the event that they were killed as a result of war or a terrorist attack. (Post has addressed this by purchasing war-risk supplemental insurance for FSNS.) They pointed also to the fact that Americans at post are receiving danger pay while FSNS are uncompensated for the risks they take in working for the Embassy. They worry about being watched and possibly targeted as they enter and leave the Embassy compound, as well as about possible attacks away from the office. Post management views these concerns as valid and is exploring the possibility of obtaining a "Unique Conditions of Work" allowance to provide the FSNS with some financial compensation for those risks.

15. (C) Meanwhile, we are beginning to experience the effects of anti-American sentiments on a professional level outside of the Embassy. During a recent visit to the Arab Medical Center, the principal hospital used by the Embassy, the RMO was pulled aside by concerned Jordanian medical colleagues and advised that he should stay away from the hospital for his own safety. On the other hand, another Embassy officer recently went on a condolence call with some trepidation, only to find himself received with typically warm Jordanian hospitality.

16. (C) Some vendors and landlords are beginning to balk at doing business with the Embassy. We no longer tell potential landlords that we are from the US Embassy when looking at properties and we are sometimes rejected by landlords when they see the lease and realize they are dealing with the USG. In one case, an ironwork vendor who has done grill work for the Embassy for years is refusing to work with us now.

17. (C) Comment: While the recent political climate change for Americans in Jordan is largely due to the war with Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains at the forefront of Jordanian concerns. To date we have experienced no degradation in either the quality of FSN performance or their willingness to continue working for the USG. However, the familial and societal pressures on our FSN staff to disassociate themselves from the Embassy will increase as the conflict in Iraq -- and the Intifada -- go on. End comment.

GNEHM